

MINISTRY OF SHIPPING

1217

Now that the War had been manoeuvred by the Military Command into a pure war of exhaustion.

I felt that our shipping had become the most vital and vulnerable point in the issue of victory or defeat.

I was convinced that much more was needed than could be done by the Admiralty and the Board of Trade, separately and in combination, to save us

from the desperate position into which we were

rapidly drifting through lack of initiative, grasp, and

vigour. I thought the handling of our shipping

tonnage was so important a matter, involving such

unremitting attention to detail in the way of organis-

ing voyages, controlling the ports, building new

ships, that it was a one-man job, and a task which

would absorb the concentrated mind of a whole

department, directed and manned by those who had

practical experience in the management of our

mercantile marine.

With regard to my first two proposals, the President

of the Board of Trade said in substance that what I suggested

either had been done or could not be

Mr. Runciman done. On the proposition that I put forward

temporises about a Shipping Controller, "he had

already decided to ask two of the greatest shipping experts of the day *to assist him and take*

off his shoulders some of the very heavy work connected

with shipping. And AS TIME WENT ON he hoped to be

able to delegate more and more responsibility to them"

It was all very leisurely- If shipping
resources were
already inadequate for essential war
services and now
likely to break down entirely before June
—and the
Admiralty vowed they could not see how
to stop our
enormous losses—every hour was
precious as blood
to a man whose wounds cannot be
staunches.

It was also pointed out, in
opposition to my